



Maricopa County

News Release

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Aseptic Meningitis on the Rise

Maricopa County seeing twice the cases in 2003

(Phoenix) – Maricopa County has experienced a significant increase in the number of aseptic meningitis (AM) cases in 2003. As of June 20, 2003, 181 cases of AM have been reported in Maricopa County compared to 74 cases reported by this same time in 2002 and 58 cases in 2001. **No deaths** have been reported during this recent increase in AM. Meningitis can occur in individuals of all ages, however it is more common in children, especially during the summer months. Currently, the increase is occurring most prominently in the 5 to 14 year-old age group.

Meningitis is an inflammation of the lining of the brain due to infection by viral, bacterial, or amebic organisms. Aseptic Meningitis is a relatively common viral infection of the central nervous system characterized primarily by sudden onset of fever, headache, neck pain and stiffness, and often accompanied by nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, photophobia, rash and general malaise. Aseptic (viral) meningitis is rarely fatal, unlike bacterial and amebic meningitis, which are more serious. Amebic and bacterial meningitis can result in disability or death if not promptly treated. Initial symptoms of aseptic meningitis are similar to bacterial and amebic meningitis, so if a person develops signs or symptoms of meningitis, medical attention should be sought immediately. Complications are rare in aseptic (viral) meningitis and **full** recovery usually occurs within 1-2 weeks.

Aseptic Meningitis is a preventable disease. The most common routes of transmission for viruses are fecal-oral and respiratory droplets. Close personal contact is the primary avenue of spread.

Prevention of transmission is achieved through personal hygiene, especially frequent and thorough hand washing.

For more information visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website:
www.cdc.gov.